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Senate approves Cassis' social security protection effort

Lansing — The Senate today overwhelmingly passed legislation that will protect people from unauthorized disclosure of their Social Security numbers. Senate Bill 795, sponsored by Sen. Nancy Cassis (R-Novi), is part of a broad effort to stop the explosion of identity theft in Michigan and help victims get their good credit back.

“As technology improves, we must be ever more vigilant about protecting our personal information,” Cassis said. “This bill will protect our residents by helping to ensure that their Social Security numbers are not distributed without their permission.”

SB 795 prohibits individuals, companies, governmental organizations such as schools and universities, or other legal entities from disclosing to a third-party or publicly displaying the Social Security number of a person, unless that person consents or the disclosure is authorized by law.

Other key components of the ID theft package would:

- Prohibit denying or reducing credit to ID theft victims.
- Stop soliciting or extending credit to consumers by mailing unsolicited checks and similar items.
- Give police and prosecutors the power to open criminal investigations and bring cases in the jurisdiction where the victim resides or where the crime was committed.
- Create a standardized certificate ID theft victims can use to prove their identity has been used for fraudulent purposes so they can restore their credit histories more quickly.

In 2002 alone, more than 160,000 people — 4,640 in Michigan — reported having their identity stolen to the Federal Trade Commission. Hundreds of thousands of people each year are estimated to be victims.

The identity theft package approved today comprises SB 220, 657, 792-795, 797, 798 and 803. It now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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